

Fire and Rescue Department

Fire and Rescue Department

► Agency Mission

To prevent fires and the uncontrolled release of hazardous materials, control and extinguish fires, and provide emergency medical service (EMS) and rescue response, including response to disaster situations resulting from natural or human cause.

► Trends/Issues

The Fire and Rescue Department (FRD) operates 35 fire stations staffed full-time with County personnel and supplemented by volunteers. The FRD serves Fairfax County and its citizens by fighting fires, providing emergency medical assistance and other rescue operations, containing hazardous materials spills and releases, investigating fires and bombings, educating the public concerning fire and other personal safety issues, maintaining public information on matters related to agency activities, planning for emergency needs, and operating a Fire and Rescue Academy for firefighter training and an apparatus shop to ensure emergency response vehicles are service ready. The Department supports regional, national, and international emergency response operations through maintaining and supporting the Urban Search and Rescue Team, Virginia Task Force 1.

The Department strives to meet the many challenges of providing excellence in public service through continuous analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of current operations, examining alternative methods of service provision (adopting or adapting them when they provide enhanced benefits), and anticipating future demands for agency services in order to be prepared to meet those demands in the most appropriate manner possible given available resources.

The Department's most important accomplishment is that of providing exceptional emergency services to the County's 969,749 citizens, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, (responding to over 56,000 emergency medical calls, 22,000 suppression calls and 4,400 public service requests in FY 2001). These responses continue to grow dramatically, with a 44 percent increase in operational responses from FY 1991 to FY 2001.

Since 1997, the Department has implemented a number of compelling initiatives to ensure the ready availability of fire and rescue services to our citizens. The Department opened a new fire station (FS39, North Point) in the Reston area in FY 2001 to better serve our community in the western area of the County, adding 33 uniformed personnel. In FY 2002, the Department added nine Advanced Life Support (ALS) certified personnel to the three stations in Fairfax County that did not have full time ALS positions assigned: Gunston, Clifton and Great Falls. These additional personnel will ensure that citizens throughout the County have equivalent ALS coverage from the stations serving their areas.

The Department opened its Occupational Health Center late in FY 1997. This center has proven to be so successful that it expanded from its original mission (to provide comprehensive occupational health services to Fire and Rescue Department uniform and volunteer personnel), to include the provision of medical examinations for all County public safety agencies and their applicants. In FY 2001, the Department initiated a program to allow surrounding jurisdictions' public safety services access to our specialized medical examinations on a fee-for-service basis.

Fire and Rescue Department

The comprehensive and public safety oriented medical examination has not only identified routine fitness for duty issues, but through early identification of significant medical conditions, has helped employees address life-threatening ailments and receive life-saving medical care. The Occupational Health and Safety program continues to be at the forefront of firefighter health and fitness issues and is one of the national models for such interests.

The Department's hazardous materials programs (with specially trained operational response teams supported by highly trained investigators and technical experts from the Fire Prevention Hazardous Materials Section), provide the County and its citizens with significant expertise to manage small as well as catastrophic hazardous materials spills, while mitigating the impact of associated contamination. An unfortunate consequence of a highly developed economy is the proliferation of chemicals and other industrial by-products that have the potential to cause significant environmental harm. In years past, Department personnel were called upon to manage the horrendous fuel spill from the Colonial pipeline. More recently, the Fire and Rescue Department hazardous materials personnel managed the very difficult and dangerous black powder spill on Rt. I-95. While large hazardous materials spills always involve a significant threat to the surrounding population and area, because of the expertise maintained by the Fire and Rescue Department, these incidents can be managed to ensure the least negative impact on our environment and our citizens. Hazardous materials training and expertise have evolved to meet the increasingly complex and delicate operational requirements of these incidents, and will need to do so in the future.

The Department has explored, analyzed, and implemented a number of critical operational and logistical improvements that directly contribute to the ability of field personnel to deliver services to our population. Department personnel identified critical factors involving funding, personnel, supplies, and equipment imperative to the successful operation of this large public safety agency. The successful accomplishment of the following initiatives may not present as grandly as the description of an operational response to a major incident, such as the Dogwood School fire, but the initiatives described below provide the essential underpinnings to support the efforts of our firefighters as they directly serve the public.

The following initiatives have contributed significantly to the efficiency and effectiveness of our service provision:

- large fire vehicle and ambulance replacement programs to ensure these very expensive units are replaced when they become uneconomic to operate;
- redesign of our ambulances to prolong unit life and improve patient care;
- capital and operating equipment replacement programs to ensure efficiency in operation;
- upgrade and lease purchase of technologically advanced self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and heart defibrillators to capture the benefits of embedded technology using an economically efficient funding instrument;
- acquisition of sufficient thermal imaging cameras to ensure their availability throughout the County;
- upgrade of the radio system and provision of portable radios to all on-duty firefighters for their protection and better management of personnel resources on emergency scenes;
- establishment of an acute care facility within the Occupational Health Center to provide immediate medical care for minor occupational injuries, helping to avoid costly workman's compensation hospital charges and saving personnel time away from the work site;

Fire and Rescue Department

- establishment of a protective gear shop to manage, repair, clean, and maintain personal protective gear and SCBA;
- expansion of the apparatus repair facility to provide service at two locations within the County, and to limit the time vehicles are out of service for repair;
- implementation of a car safety seat installation program to protect our smallest citizens;
- establishment of a small but effective blighted properties response unit to address this growing community's health and safety hazard;
- implementation of a new class of volunteer providers, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) volunteers, who provide medical response capability but are not certified firefighters;
- increased availability of fire inspectors to provide after-hours inspections upon request from the business community to avoid loss of business during inspections;
- provision of technologically enhanced equipment to assist with arson investigations;
- enhancements to our information technology infrastructure to support agency wide database applications, and to manage all agency computers and local area network based systems;
- enhanced training of staff to prepare them for the demands of the increasingly technological and complex hazards and responses they will face (weapons of mass destruction, for example);
- assigning an officer to address uniformed women's issues in the Department;
- creation of a Fiscal Services Division to address the ever-burgeoning financial issues associated with operation of a large multifaceted fire and rescue department;
- enhanced recruitment efforts to help to attract candidates representing both genders and the multi-ethnic composition of Fairfax County; and
- development of a strategic plan to prepare the department to respond to issues vital to the successful provision of services in the future.

The Department has made great strides in protecting its citizens by embracing the highest quality standards of incident management and control for its suppression, medical, rescue, and hazardous materials responses. However, on both the immediate and far-reaching horizons loom challenges that will sharply test the Department's capacity and ability to continue to provide such excellent services. Many of the challenges facing the Department mirror the challenges facing other County agencies. However, the Department also faces highly complex and difficult challenges that are unique to its public safety mission. The ability to address these challenges will require dedication of human, physical, and fiscal resources for the foreseeable future.

Fire and Rescue Department

The challenges that affect the delivery of services of the Fire and Rescue Department that are shared Countywide include:

- population increases and population changes that lead to increased calls for service and challenge our ability to communicate with non-English speaking citizens during potentially life threatening emergencies;
- changes in the distribution of population by age that affect the services demanded; for example, an increasingly elderly population presents demands on the system different from those for younger citizens;
- increasing density and worsening traffic congestion that serve to impede the path of emergency vehicles;
- the clustering of the business population in corridors such as Dulles or Tysons that exacerbate the density and congestion problems; and
- the increasing number of senior Department personnel with exceptional knowledge and experience who will be eligible for retirement over the next ten years, leaving less seasoned personnel to carry on.

Other challenges are unique to Fire and Rescue's public safety mission. Effectively meeting these challenges will require not only additional personnel, equipment and supplies, but intense and specialized training with technologically advanced tools and devices. These challenges include:

- preparing for the potential impact from weapons of mass destruction (due to proximity to Washington, DC) and the potential for a catastrophic disaster within Fairfax County from human, weather or other factors;
- meeting national fire-fighting safety and deployment standards in an era of limited resources;
- training firefighters and other responders to maintain their certifications and expertise in an increasingly complex environment, recognizing the indirect costs of backfilling field positions when incumbents are at training;
- assisting the community in acquiring training and equipment to initiate automatic external defibrillator (AED) programs in malls, schools and businesses to help to save lives;
- addressing the increasingly complex and deadly hazardous materials incidents from facilities within Fairfax County and from trucks carrying such products that traverse the County over major interstate highways;
- developing facilities, programs and delivery methods for our specialized services to ensure equal access by all County citizens;
- planning, locating, and building fire stations to ensure that areas currently outside our capability to reach them within response time parameters will be served equivalently in the future (filling in "void" areas); and
- meeting the needs of our business community for inspections, plans review and related support to ensure they experience a business friendly response as they address their regulatory responsibilities.

Fire and Rescue Department

In addition, as the number of direct service providers (uniformed field personnel) grows in response to population and density changes, the stress on the administrative and support infrastructure will become unbearable without commensurate additions to support staff. Only 93 positions from the agency total of 1,274 (7 percent of the work force) are dedicated to management, administration, health and safety, communications, apparatus management, information technology, equipment management, other support services, training, and volunteer support.

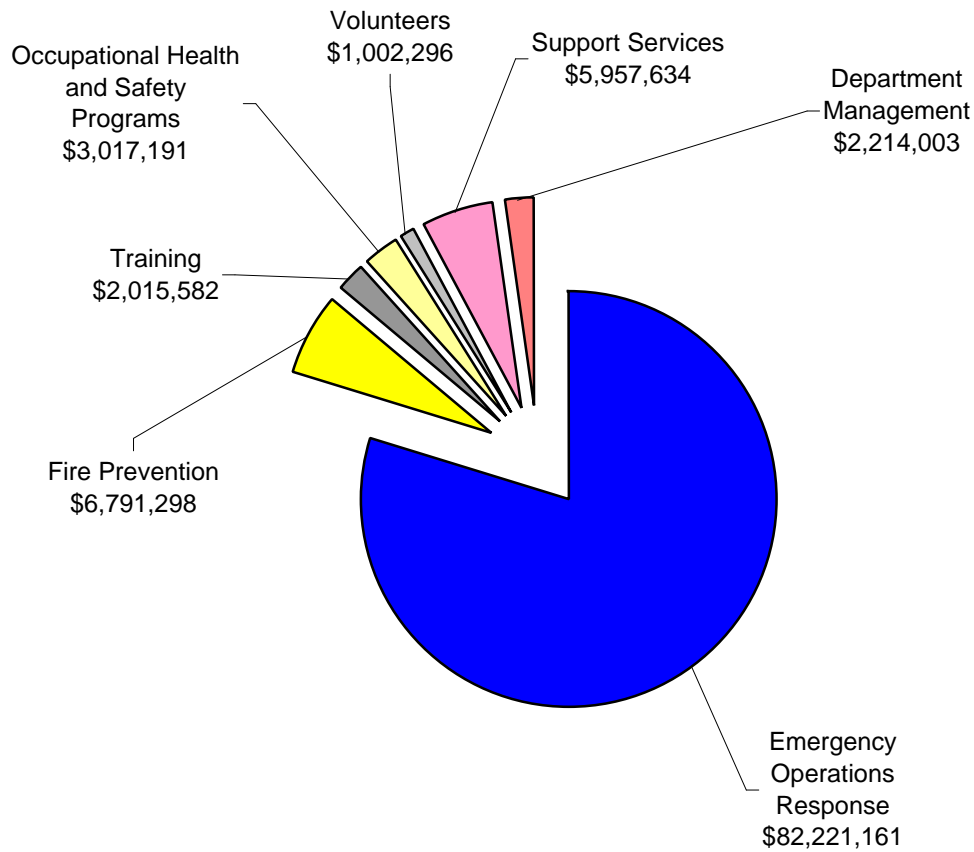
Continued excellent service to our growing population will require the conscientious allocation of resources based on a detailed, systematic analysis of demand, need, efficiency, and costs/benefits in order to achieve the optimum complement of personnel, equipment, facilities, and services required to meet that goal. Recognizing the many challenges it will face in the near and far future, the Department will utilize its every resource in the most effective manner possible as it strives to continue to provide excellent service and protection for our Fairfax County citizens.

► Summary of All Agency CAPS

CAPS Number	CAPS Title	CAPS Net Cost	CAPS Number of Positions/SYE
92-01	Emergency Operations Response	\$82,221,161	1103/1103
92-02	Fire Prevention	\$2,188,258	78/78
92-03	Training	\$2,015,582	14/14
92-04	Occupational Health and Safety Programs	\$2,980,691	10/10
92-05	Volunteers	\$1,002,296	2/2
92-06	Support Services	\$5,881,701	38/38
92-07	Department Management	\$2,206,367	29/29
TOTAL Agency		\$98,496,056	1274/1274

Fire and Rescue Department

Fire and Rescue Department



Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Expenditures = \$103,219,165

Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Net Cost = \$98,496,056